

WHO CARES? INTRODUCTION

As part of the National Curriculum, the current framework for Personal, Social and Health Educational and Citizenship at Key Stages 1 - 4 has as one of its main aims to '*prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life*' these include:

- * being informed & responsible members of society
- * developing self esteem & confidence
- * respecting differences
- * understanding the needs of others
- * challenging stereotyping
- * promoting equal opportunities
- * personal & corporate responsibilities

'Who Cares' is a 19 minute programme primarily designed to raise awareness of the existence of Young Carers and to provide a discussion leader to establish how their needs can be recognised and met by both fellow students and teaching staff.

The programme can also be used to support a range of PSE and tutorial sessions e.g. recognising feelings, friendship groups, facing challenges, roles & responsibilities, dealing with difficult situations, caring, awareness of minority groups, stress management.

' WHO CARES '

Although 'Who Cares' can be shown to a wide range of audiences, it has been created with two main groups in mind:

a) **for students** - to support PSE sessions & Tutorials and promote debate on the role of the Young Carer - recommended student age range 8 to 15.

b) **for teachers** - to give an insight into the pressures Young Carers face and to illustrate ways that schools could provide support

The video is divided into three sections:

Section 1 (11 minutes) - A case study providing an insight into a typical day for Young Carers Lee (14 years old) and Katherine (12) who not only look after their mother Amanda, suffering from Lupus, but also, because of Amanda's illness, providing support for their 4 year old brother Aaron.

Section 2 (6 minutes) - Summarises some of the problems facing Young Carers - includes clips from Lee, Katherine and Amanda plus contributions from two other Young Carers 9 year old Gurdis and 12 year old Gurdat.

Section 3 (2 minutes) - ideas for an Action Plan that schools could consider implementing to provide additional support.

A. USING THE DVD FOR PSE SUPPORT

It is important to plan sessions in advance to take into account the personal experiences of members of each group watching the programme. The following is a recommendation on how the DVD can be used:

INTRODUCTION *It is suggested that a brief introduction to the subject be given with open questions posed to the group to ascertain their understanding of the role and responsibilities of Young Carers. For example:*

Do you know what a Young Carer does?

How old do you think Young Carers are?

How many Young Carers do you think there are in the UK?

Without providing answers to these questions

Play Section 1.

SECTION 1 - *the case study. Stop the DVD after Section 1. The case study provides the following answers to the questions posed.*

- * Responsibilities undertaken by Young Carers include:
 - * recognising medical crisis
 - * organising help in medical crisis
 - * organising the household
 - * domestic chores
 - * paying bills
 - * personal care tasks
 - * lifting
 - * emotional support

*Young Carers are children or young people under 18 years old who are undertaking a substantial caring role at home for a disabled or ill relative. Although usually a parent, this can also be a grand parent, a brother or sister.

* The average age of a Young Carer is 12 but ages range from 4 to 18

* There are over 51,000 Young Carers in the UK of whom 60% are girls

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- * 25% of Young Carers look after a parent with a mental health problem
- * 30% of adults with severe mental health problems have dependent children

GROUP DISCUSSION

Introduce the debate by posing the question:

What problems do you think that Young Carers could have ?

Use the following statements to cover the key problem areas.

- * **Caring restricts social life and friendship** - how?
- * **Caring often means missing school & falling behind** - what could help?
- * **Caring often involves very intimate, personal tasks** - how would you cope?
- * **Young Carers find it embarrassing to share their problems** - why?
- * **Caring means having to learn to cope with pressure** - explain?

How would those in the group cope with such responsibilities and pressures ?

Additional discussion statements

- * **Caring can 'silence' children through fear, embarrassment or pride - why ?**
- * **Their lives are a 'cycle of crises' - what could result from such pressure ?**
- * **An effect of caring is limited horizons - why ?**
- * **Few Young Carers enjoy their caring role - what effect could this have ?**

Conclude the debate by posing the question:

What do the group believe that Young Carers need assistance with ?

SUMMARY

Section 2 of the DVD summarises the main problems faced by Young Carers and, as such, can be used to conclude the session with students. However, prior to playing Section 2, provide a brief introduction by explaining that this clip includes material from Lee, Katherine & Amanda - seen in Section 1- plus contributions from two other Young Carers - 9 year old Gurdis and 12 year old Gurdat. Apart from helping to care for their father who suffers from MS, they also look after their 6 year old brother who suffers from severe excema which is often life threatening and results in frequent hospital stays.

PLAY SECTION 2

KEY GRAPHICS FROM DVD

- * **Caring restricts social life and friendships** - "*I know my friends don't understand but it's easier just to say 'no' rather than explain why I can't go out*"
- * **Caring often means missing school time and falling behind** - "*I sometimes have so much to do that I don't get down to homework until after 9.00 o'clock*"
- * **Caring often involves very intimate, personal tasks** - "*Of all the things I do - including helping him on the toilet - I wish I didn't have to cut his toenails*"
- * **Young Carers often find it embarrassing to share their problems** - "*I don't know what the others in my class would think if they knew my Dad had tried to kill himself.*"
- * **Caring means having to learn to cope with pressure** - "*Sometimes when I think about her dying, I just want to scream - it's not fair.*"

B. TEACHER PRESENTATIONS

Before screening the programme, the following points can be put forward to emphasise the importance of providing resources to support Young Carers

- * Young Carers are identified in the Quality Protects Framework for Action Guidance 1998 as potential Children in Need as the extra responsibilities they have may impact on their physical, emotional and social development and deny them the same opportunities as other children.
- * It is incumbent upon Local Authorities to identify these children and to provide services to ensure that their education and general development do not suffer.
- * The National Strategy for Carers recommends that there should be a Young Carers link person in each school.

For sessions to teaching staff the DVD can either be screened complete or stopped after each Section for discussion. For teaching staff presentations there is an additional Section 3 which provides ideas on how schools could support Young Carers.

The following are examples of the needs of Young Carers from an educational perspective and provide points for discussion with teaching staff to explore how these could be satisfied:

- * Recognition of their situation
- * Understanding of their problems
- * Someone to talk to
- * Assistance to access help from other agencies/sources
- * Flexible approach in terms of homework/work schedules
- * Opportunities to join in extra/after school activities
- * The knowledge that they are not alone

C SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

(GRAPHICS FROM SECTION 3)

Could you:

- * arrange to talk confidentially with Young Carers?
- * be flexible about homework if there is a crisis at home ?
- * organise extra tuition periods if required?
- * arrange for a phone to be made available to enable Young Carers to contact home?
- * be attentive to Young Carers problems? They may not share these at home.
- * introduce disability awareness training into your curriculum?
- * make staff and pupils more aware of Young Carers and their needs?